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HIV Testing in Health Care Settings

During your health care visit today your medical care provider may want to perform an HIV test. The following are answers to questions that people often have about HIV testing:

What is HIV?

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) causes a disease that weakens the immune system, making it hard for the body to fight infections.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV is spread by the exchange of certain bodily fluids, primarily by having unprotected sex or sharing needles with an HIV-infected person.

What is an HIV test?

An HIV test determines if your body is producing antibodies to HIV. If you have HIV antibodies this means that you have been infected with HIV. There are both conventional and rapid HIV tests which use blood, plasma, or saliva to test for the antibodies.

What if I test HIV positive?

If you are HIV positive, you will want to discuss treatment options with your medical care provider. Many HIV treatment options exist for people who are HIV positive.

What if I test HIV negative?

Protect yourself as described below. If you have unprotected sex or share needles for any reason, you should have an HIV test every year.

You can protect yourself and others from HIV by:

- Using a latex/polyurethane condom (male or female) when you have sex. (Use only water-based lubricants. Oil-based lubricants will make condoms less effective.)
- Not sharing needles for injecting drugs, steroids, vitamins, tattooing, or piercing.

Other resources for help:

Call the California HIV/AIDS Hotline at (800) 367-2437 (AIDS) for HIV referral and consultation resources in your area or visit the Office of AIDS Web site at:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/AIDS/Pages/OAHIVTestHCS.aspx>.